

Emirates upcycles SA billboards into school bags

In an effort to spread the message of sustainability and make a positive impact on local communities, Emirates has given its old advertising billboards in South Africa a new lease of life, transforming the PVC Flex material into hundreds of school bags which were donated to students of Emfundisweni Primary School in Alexandra.



Thenbakazi Giyama, Principal of Emfundisweni Primary School in Alexandra with Fouad Caunhye, Regional Manager of Emirates Southern Africa (both centre), with staff of the school and Emirates.

A total of 517 square meters of PVC Flex material was collected and sent to Johannesburg, where Emirates commissioned Soweto-based entrepreneur Raymond Phiri of Motion Bags to design and create the bags. Phiri and his team, with support from Just Bags – another local enterprise, helped bring the vision to life, creating 200 school bags and 125 shopping bags.

"The movement towards sustainable living is now more important than ever, and we need to take an active role to reduce our carbon footprint and make an impact where we can," said Fouad Caunhye, regional manager of Emirates Southern Africa.

"This project not only gave us that opportunity, but also enabled us to engage with our community in a meaningful way. Partnering with local entrepreneur Raymond Phiri to create items that will bring joy to children, will only strengthen the close bonds Emirates already has with South Africa and its people."



Raymond Phiri, owner of Motion Bags, makes the sustainable Errirates school bags



Students at the Erfundisweni Primary School in Alexandra with their upcycled Errirates school bags

"This project is very close to my heart because I know what it's like not to have a bag for school when the other children

do," said Raymond Phiri, owner of Motion Bags. "These bags are incredibly strong, water-resistant and will endure. Grade 1 learners that receive these bags will be able to use them until grade 7."

Caunhye and representatives from the airline's local office in Johannesburg visited the primary school to handover the upcycled bags to 200 students. Also included in the bags was a selection of stationery and activities books from Emirates' onboard products for children.

"To see the happy faces of our students when they received their new bags, was such a delight," said Thembakazi Giyama, Principal of Emfundisweni Primary School in Alexandra. "It is all the more special knowing that the spirit and sentiment behind these bags is the sustainable future of our children."

Environmentally responsible airline

"Over the years, we have introduced multiple sustainable best practices which include our sustainable blankets produced from 100% recycled bottles and a young, fuel-efficient fleet of aircraft," said Caunhye.

Emirates has introduced sustainable blankets produced from 100% recycled plastic bottles, uses a drywash technique to clean its aircraft, and has installed a one-megawatt array of solar photovoltaic panels.

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